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SUBJECT: JULY 4 RECEPTION USED TO PUSH REFORM AGENDA AND ADDRESS FOOD SHORTAGE ISSUE

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Summary  
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¶1. Consistent with Washington guidance, the Mission held a scaled back reception on July 2 to mark Independence Day. We used the reception to focus on three urgent issues in Kenya: the need to accelerate implementation of the reform agenda, the importance of promoting national reconciliation, and the need to address the food shortage problem. The event was prominently covered by the media.  
End Summary.

¶2. The reception was well-attended by a wide range of government ministers, Members of Parliament, civil society, religious leaders, and others. Ex-President Moi attended. Speaker of Parliament Kenneth Marende spoke and used the occasion to emphasize the importance of moving ahead expeditiously to implement fundamental reforms.

¶3. The Ambassador highlighted themes relating to the rule of law, diversity and reconciliation, and the reform process. He announced two new USG programs intended to help address food shortages.

¶4. Text of Ambassador's remarks:

Quote: Mr. Speaker, Honorable Ministers, Members of Parliament, Colleagues, Guests, and Friends:

I want to extend a very warm welcome to our celebration of the 233rd anniversary of the independence of the United States of America. We are also celebrating the vibrant, strong, and expanding partnership between our two countries -- a partnership based on the democratic values and friendship we share.

Those universal democratic values were immortally articulated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Some of you may have wondered why we are celebrating on July 2 instead of on the 4th. Well, we thought it best not to do it over a weekend when many people would be away, and July 2 is actually a very appropriate date, since it was on July 2 that the members of the Continental Congress actually voted for independence.

During the past 233 years Americans have consolidated institutions intended to ensure democratic government. In light of the profound crisis that gripped Kenya last year, it is relevant to recall that the progress the people of the United States have made over these many years has often been difficult, sometimes painfully slow, and occasionally bloody. Examining this history tells us that the process of building democracy is never easy and is never complete. To the extent we have been successful, we have benefited from the extraordinary achievement of our founding fathers, for they put in

place a constitutional framework based on the principle of checks and balances. That system was premised on a hard-headed assessment that, in order to protect the interests of all citizens, the power of any one institution, individual, or group must be limited. The challenge to balance respect for the will of the majority with the necessity to protect the rights of minorities is a constant struggle in all democracies.

As we reflect upon this independence anniversary and the partnership we share, I am reminded of the Kenyan proverb: "Nia ikiwa moja kilicho mbali huja (no matter their differences, people working toward similar goals can achieve them). The Kenyan people deserve enormous credit for coming together to overcome the crisis that threatened to tear apart the fabric of their nation. They did this drawing on their shared interests to strengthen the country's democracy, society, and economy. The coalition government is based on these shared interests.

Democracies, whether the United States or Kenya, grow stronger by learning from the crises they experience, and by dealing with the underlying issues they reveal. Last year the coalition government committed itself to an agenda for fundamental reforms. During my travels throughout the country, I have heard from Kenyans across the political, ethnic, and social spectrum that they expect these reforms to be implemented. The United States stands firmly on the side of the Kenyan people in wanting to see results. There must be a greater sense of urgency and clear direction from the national leadership.

Among the many things we share, the United States and Kenya are countries which encompass great diversity of cultures, ethnic and

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racial groups, and religions. Diversity enriches and strengthens our nations if we learn to value it. Though we Americans have had far more time to build our democracy than Kenya has, we can truly say that neither democratic system is perfect. In the U.S. - as in Kenya -- we struggle to fight corruption, to promote communal harmony, to foster security, and to bring about gender equity. Acutely aware of our own imperfections and limitations, we support the efforts of the Kenyan people to address the difficult challenges they face. It is the responsibility of Kenyans to solve their problems in their own way, but they need and deserve the support of their friends. We care deeply about the future of this great country, and the future of our bilateral relationship is inextricably linked to the progress of reform and democracy in Kenya.

Last year at our Independence Day celebration we dedicated the new rose garden "to peace and to the U.S.-Kenyan partnership." Perhaps its astounding growth is a good sign.

This year our national day celebration comes at a difficult time for the Kenyan people, as they face food shortages, and the combined negative economic impact of the post-election violence and the global financial crisis. This year our celebration is, therefore, deliberately more restrained.

I am pleased to announce today that the United States will be providing \$15 million to support pastoralists and subsistence farmers in the northern and eastern regions of Kenya - the areas hit hardest by continuing drought. In areas that have been affected by conflict, such as Marsabit, we have started to work with the local Members of Parliament, the government, community leaders, and others to ensure that this assistance is used equitably among different communities to promote peace and reconciliation. As an additional step to help ease food shortages and improve nutrition, I am also pleased to announce a new \$50 million program which will provide credit guarantees for private sector importation of cereals.

Americans and Kenyans share a belief in the power of the democratic spirit, profoundly illustrated by both countries' journeys to independence. I am struck by the Swahili saying that captured, long before America was founded, the need to cherish and harness diversity for the well-being of all: "Umoja ni nguvu" (unity is strength); the inscription on our currency is "one from many."

The election of President Barack Obama demonstrated how far we have come in appreciating the strength and unity that can be found through valuing diversity. I close with the words of President Obama: "No matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who would hold power. You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interest of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party."

Please join me in raising our glasses in a toast to the 233rd anniversary of the independence of the United States of America, to Kenya's democratic progress, and to the partnership between the United States and Kenya.

Ahsanteni sana na mungu awabariki. End Quote.

RANNEBERGER